

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC186
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Name of Service:	Horizons Montessori
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Address of Service:	Brigown, Curraheen Road, Bishopstown, Cork, Co Cork
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Eircode:	T12 Y438
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Name of Registered Provider:	Leonora Herlihy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	19
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	N O'Donoghue
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Horizons Montessori is a privately operated service that caters for children aged between 2 and 6 years. It provides sessional care and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Daily opening hours are from 8.45am to 11.45am and 12.30pm to 3.30pm. Horizons Montessori operates from a one story detached house situated in an urban residential area. There are two care rooms provided the Ladybird room and the Busybees room. There are developed outdoor play areas available to the front, side and rear of the premises

Staffing

There are seven adults attached to the service including the registered provider who is service based and a student on third level placement.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform

decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection. In the event the person or deputy person in charge were not on the premises a named person able to deputise was available.
 - (b) A person in charge or named deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.
 - (c) There was a clearly identified management structure in the service. This included person in charge, deputy person in charge, and early years educators.
- (2) There are six staff and one student attached to the service; all seven staff files were open to inspection.
- (a) Of the 14 references required, 13 validated references were available from past employers.
 - (b) Of the 14 references required, 1 validated reference was available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all seven staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting was deemed to be required for two of the seven adults working in the service. The copy of the police vetting was stored on file for the two staff members.
- (4) All six staff working directly with children held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at least at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(3) On the day of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of the regulation.

- In Ladybird room in the morning, there was 4 staff working with 16 children aged between 2 years and 10 months and 4 years and 9 months, all attending sessional care. In the afternoon, there was 5 staff working with 19 children aged between 2 years and 9 months and 4 years and 5 months, all attending sessional care.
- In the Busybees room in the morning, there was 1 staff working with 10 children aged between 2 years and 10 months and 4 years and 9 months, all attending sessional care.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

1(a) On the day of inspection, the following information was obtained through:

- Direct observation and discussion with staff
- Examination of relevant documentation.

Basic needs:

- Staff supported children with toileting. Staff encouraged independence and provided support as required.
- Good handwashing routines were evident on the day of inspection. Staff supervised children to wash their hands before snack and after playing outside.
- Children had access to soft tissues to clean their noses themselves.
- Drink bottles of water were brought in from home, children had access to these bottles at all times.
- Staff provided support to children that needed help when eating and children were encouraged to be self-sufficient.
- Parents provide morning snacks and evening snacks to the service. These snacks were well balanced and included yoghurts, fruits, sandwiches and crackers.
- The children were seated at their tables during snack time, and staff with them and were observed chatting about their weekend and the snacks they had.
- The children had free access and movement within the playrooms and the outdoor setting.
- A rest/quiet area was available in each room consisting of rubber mats, pillows and cushions if children required it.

Supporting Relationships:

- The service engages in a key worker system each staff member was allocated a number of children and observations were completed by the staff. This was evident throughout the sessions, individual educational plans and care plans were observed in each room for children who required these.
- Staff completed individual activities with children. These activities included matching colours and pictures, speech development activities including making sounds associated with the pictures they were looking at.
- The staff in each playroom were observed to be caring and kind towards the children and other adults in the room. Staff used soft tones when speaking the children and spoke to them at child level.
- The staff explained to the inspector that they communicate regularly with the parents, this was demonstrated by the use of a private group messaging system to communicate with parents daily, sending pictures, videos, notes and messages.

Physical environment:

- The outdoor area included natural materials such as sticks and branches, building blocks, balance walking beams and age-appropriate benches. The inspector observed that children were playing with books outdoors and role playing the story in their games.
- The indoor rooms were bright, and children's artwork was displayed throughout the service.
- Toys and equipment were age appropriate and allowed a free movement throughout the service. Toys observed on the day of inspection included wooden blocks, magnets, dolls, farm and zoo animals.
- Sensory equipment was observed both indoors and outdoors including water play, sand-play, tuff trays with lentils and a light table.

Programme of Activities:

- The person in charge explained to the inspector that activities are child led, and staff focus on individual child's needs. This included artwork, pencil grip and language skills activities.
- Short-term, medium-term and long-term plans for the room as a whole were observed in each room, staff updated the short-term throughout the day documenting children's interests.
- A monthly curriculum notebook was stored in the service. Activities and interests completed by the children were completed by staff and updated within the notebook.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The entrance door of the service was kept secured. Entry to the service was maintained by staff. This was to prevent the unauthorised access of a person or exit of unsupervised child.
- Blind cords were secured out of reach of children.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach by children.
- The outdoor area was secured with iron fencing and wooden fencing.
- Toys and equipment appeared in good condition and well maintained.

Infection Control:

- Windows in each room were open which allowed for fresh air circulation.
- Perishable food was observed in the refrigerators.
- Water temperatures were recorded in each sanitary facility between 33.2°C to 34.5°C.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables and chairs between activities.
- Foot operated bins were available in each room and sanitary facility.

Administration of Medication:

- The medication observed in the service was clearly labelled and in their original containers.
- Health care plans were available for each child. Care plans were completed by the service and signed by both parents/guardians and staff.
- All medication was stored in the room, out of reach of children and clearly identified to each staff member in the room, if required.
- All medications were in date and staff explained they were confident in administering the medication.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were clear of any obstruction and clearly identified in the room.
- Fire equipment was available in the room in the event they were needed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a member of staff with First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available to the children at all times.

- (2)
- (a) The first aid box was safely stored out of reach of children and accessible to adults within the care rooms.
 - (b) The first aid box was available to the children at all times; in the event they required it.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

It was evident throughout the day of inspection that children are supervised at all times, this was observed by staff engaging in supervision by sight and sound. Staff supported children when required. This was observed both indoors and outdoors.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

A copy of the insurance certificate for the service was furnished to the inspector. The information provided on the insurance certificate included:

- The contact details for the insurance provider.
- The name and address of the service insured.
- The number of children covered by the insurance was 33 children.
- The categories of insurance cover for the service.

The expiry date of the current insurance cover was 27 March 2026.